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WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON.

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WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON.

BY

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NOTE. — For most of the facts and quotations contained in this short sketch, see "William Lloyd Garrison: The Story of his Life, told by his Children"; "Garrison and His Times," by Oliver Johnson; "The Garrison Mob," edited by Theodore Lyman 3d, and the "Memorial History of Boston," Vol. III.

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WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON.

1805–1879.

I.

Several years ago a new bronze statue was placed in the Commonwealth Avenue Park, in Boston.

The unveiling of the statue passed almost unnoticed. There was no speech-making, no gathering of the crowd.

But a group of little girls, playing there later, ran up to the sitting figure; and one of them, climbing upon its knee, gave it a hearty kiss.

Few of our statues have been welcomed in just that way. Perhaps because few of our great men have done anything that a little girl could understand so well as she can the fact that Mr. Garrison helped to free the slaves.

He helped to free them by saying again and again, in words that forced people to listen to him, that slavery was wrong.

A stock of real Puritan courage enabled him to persist in saying this when others tried to stop him. A habit of self-denial gave him power to endure poverty for himself while trying to promote the welfare of the slaves.

His courage was handed down to him, perhaps, from his father's mother's father, Daniel Palmer; his self-denial, however, he learned during the hardy training of his penniless childhood.

His mother was very poor. Lloyd was taught early that he must take care of himself. When quite too young for the task he was to attempt, he left his home in Newburyport and went as a shoemaker's apprentice to Lynn.

"There the little boy, who was only nine years old, and so small that his fellow-workmen called him 'not much bigger than a last,' toiled for several months, until he could make a tolerable shoe. He always retained a vivid recollection of the heavy lapstone on which he pounded many a sole until his body ached and his knees were sore and tremulous; of the threads

he waxed, and the sore fingers he experienced from sewing shoes."

The work was much too hard for him: he left Lynn and went back to Newburyport.

Although his youth was far from being a holiday-time, we read that "Lloyd was a thorough boy, fond of games and of all boyish sports. Barefooted he trundled his hoop all over Newburyport; he swam the Merrimac in summer, and skated on it in winter. He was good at sculling a boat; he played at bat-and-ball and snow-ball, and sometimes led the South-end boys against the North-enders in the numerous conflicts between the youngsters of the two sections; he was expert with marbles.

"Once with a playmate he swam across the river to Great Rock, a distance of three-fourths of a mile, and effected his return against the tide; and once, in winter, he nearly lost his life by breaking through the ice on the river, and reached the shore only after a desperate struggle, the ice yielding as often as he attempted to climb upon its surface."

He was fond of pets, and made them fond of him. One night, after coming home from a long stay elsewhere, "he was awakened by the rubbing of soft fur against his face, and found that puss [his favorite cat] had brought her latest litter of kittens, born while he was away, and had deposited them, one by one, about his head."

For a number of years none of the kinds of work tried by the boy seemed suited to him, but in the year 1818 he discovered his right place in a printing-office.

II.

As printer's boy, Lloyd set up type for the *Newburyport Herald*. When sixteen years of age he began to write for the paper, and as soon as his apprenticeship was over, undertook himself to edit a journal. It was called the *Free Press*.

In the *Free Press* of June 29, 1826, he wrote, "There is one theme which should be dwelt upon till our whole country is free from the curse: it is SLAVERY!"

At the time when Mr. Garrison began to declare his opinion of slavery, there was a certain monthly newspaper which was printed for the special purpose of convincing people that the slaves should be set free. It was a tiny sheet with a very large name,— *The Genius of Universal Emancipation!* Its Quaker editor, Benjamin Lundy, saw that Garrison would make a strong ally. He persuaded him to go to Baltimore, where the *Genius* was published, to write for the paper's editorial columns.

Then how William Lloyd Garrison did write! Lundy had said that the slaves ought gradually to be freed; Garrison declared that their freedom ought not to be delayed for a day — for an hour.

Of course this brought a storm about his head. Baltimore was a great slave centre. Slaves were constantly shipped thence to be sold in the Charleston or Savannah or New Orleans markets. Mr. Garrison knew that every sentence he prepared put him in peril, but the knowledge did not silence him.

When a vessel belonging to a Mr. Todd of Newburyport left Baltimore for New Orleans with nearly ninety slaves on board, Garrison's indignation was strong. He wrote a stinging rebuke. He said that if bringing slaves from Africa was piracy, carrying them from one port to another was piracy as well; and that men who took part in such a trade were "highway robbers and murderers." The Baltimore people and the Newburyport owner were incensed. Mr. Todd and the Grand

Jury of Maryland brought suits against Mr. Garrison for libel.

The trial went against him. He was sentenced to pay a fine of fifty dollars, and nearly fifty more for costs. So large a sum was not to be found lying idle in the pocket of an anti-slavery editor. Mr. Garrison had not the money, and was thrown into jail.

But even in jail there was work to be done. Mr. Garrison writes: —

"During my late incarceration in Baltimore prison, four men came to obtain a runaway slave. He was brought out of his cell to confront his master, but pretended not to know him, did not know that he had ever seen him before, could not recollect his name.

"Of course the master was exceedingly irritated.

"'Don't you remember,' said he, 'when I gave you, not long since, thirty-nine lashes under the apple-tree? Another time, when I gave you a sound flogging in the barn? Another time, when you were scourged for giving

me the lie, by saying that the horse was in good condition?'

"'Yes,' replied the slave, whose memory was thus quickened, 'I do recollect. You have beaten me cruelly without a cause; you have not given me enough to eat and drink; and I don't want to go back again. I wish you to sell me to another master. I had rather even go to Georgia than to return home.'

"'I'll let you know, you villain,' said the master, 'that *my* wishes, and not *yours*, are to be consulted. I'll learn you how to run away again.'

"The other men advised him to take the black home, and cut him up in inch pieces for his impudence, obstinacy, and desertion, swearing tremendously all the while. The slave was ordered back to his cell.

"I had stood speechless during this singular dialogue, my blood boiling in my veins, and my limbs trembling with emotion. I now walked up to the gang, and addressing the master as calmly as possible, said:—

"'Sir, what right have you to that poor creature?'

"He looked up into my face very innocently, and replied: —

"'My father left him to me.'

"'Suppose,' said I, 'your father had broken into a bank and stolen ten thousand dollars, and safely bequeathed the sum as a legacy, could you conscientiously keep the money? For myself, I had rather rob any bank to an indefinite amount, than kidnap a fellow-being, or hold him in bondage; the crime would be less injurious to society, and less sinful in the sight of God.'" [1]

Many weeks went by while Garrison waited in that jail, but his courage never flagged.

"High walls and huge the body may confine,
And iron grates obstruct the prisoner's gaze,
And massive bolts may baffle his design,
And vigilant keepers watch his devious ways.
Yet scorns th' immortal mind this base control;
No chains can bind it and no cell enclose.

[1] William Lloyd Garrison, Vol. I., p. 175.

Swifter than light it flies from pole to pole,
And in a flash from heaven to earth it goes."

* * * * * * * * *

This he wrote upon the walls of his cell.

The world in general gave him little sympathy. "Served him right" was the general comment. Only a few knew better. There was a poet who knew better. Mr. Whittier wrote to Henry Clay, asking that Mr. Garrison might be set at liberty. Mr. Whittier would have been heeded, too, had not another friend, Mr. Arthur Tappan, of New York, come forward at the same time, to rescue him. Mr. Tappan paid the fine, and released Mr. Garrison from his durance of forty-nine days.

III.

Mr. Garrison did not go on with the Baltimore paper. He came to Boston, and began to publish another anti-slavery newspaper called the *Liberator*.

Hard names had been flung at him. He had been called bitter, severe, harsh, uncompromising, — "that madcap, Garrison." In the first number of the *Liberator* he wrote: "I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. . . . I am in earnest; I will not equivocate; I will not excuse; I will not retreat a single inch; and I will be heard!"

He was heard; there was no closing the ears to what he said; but for years men tried to drown his voice with volleys of abuse.

The publishing of the *Liberator* raised a hue and cry.

At the South, laws were made forbidding the passing of the paper through the mails. Garrison would have been thrown into prison

again if North Carolina, South Carolina, or Georgia could have laid hands on him.

A reward of $5,000 was offered by the State of Georgia to any person who should bring William Lloyd Garrison to trial within its limits.

But Mr. Garrison was undaunted. He wrote in answer to the threats that poured upon him: ". . . Know that a hundred men stand ready to fill our place as soon as it is made vacant by violence. . . . For every hair of our head which you touch, there shall spring up an asserter of the rights of your bondsmen, and an upbraider of your crimes."

Some Boston men, hearing that a dangerous paper was being printed in their city, went to the office of its editor, to learn what they could of his dangerous ways.

They climbed to the upper story of a building called Merchants' Hall, opened the door of a great dingy room, and glanced within.

A press stood in one corner by the ink-bespattered windows; a few composing-stands

were near; there was a long table on which the copies of the *Liberator* could be folded for the mail. A tall, slight young man and a Negro boy — these were Garrison and his assistant — were busily at work. Contrast this with any of the great printing-rooms of Boston, then or at the present day.

A sort of bed was upon the floor. Did the editor sleep in this forlorn place? Indeed he did, and often ate there too. He and Isaac Knapp, his fellow-publisher, had said that they would print the *Liberator* as long as they could do so by living on bread and water; and for more than a year a bakery was their only kitchen, and the office their only dining-hall.

The men who saw Garrison's poverty were blind to the meaning of his devotion. They turned away, assured that nothing of moment could come from that "obscure hole."

The obscure hole is famous now. To it went those who were to be the leaders of their time. From Garrison they gained fresh insight and zeal.

Under his guidance anti-slavery meetings were held, anti-slavery societies were formed. What these societies worked for has long since been brought to pass; but it was an uphill pull, and the city which raises a statue to William Lloyd Garrison to-day mobbed him fifty years ago.

Slavery had grown to be the nation's darling sin. It was a problem with which the North was afraid to deal. If the Southerners would not listen to a word against it, Northern friends were as prompt in hushing adverse speech.

Abolitionists were looked upon as fire-brands, the South as an explosive; the Union, it was thought, would be shattered if the fire were not stamped out. The meetings of the Abolitionists, therefore, in different parts of the country were broken up, their speakers roughly handled, their defenders put to the test of ridicule and scorn.

In October, 1835, an anti-slavery society, carried on by some of the ladies of Boston, tried to hold a meeting in the building where the

Liberator office then was, — No. 46 Washington Street.

That summer had been a turbulent one for Boston. An irritable spirit possessed the people, for many of the citizens, opposed to all Abolitionists, were especially angered by the coming of George Thompson, an anti-slavery orator, from England.

Mr. Thompson had been asked by the ladies to address their meeting, but it was afterwards decided that he would better not try to do so, and he left the city.

People in general did not know that he had gone, and some particularly inflamed persons sent out the following hand-bill: —

"THOMPSON,

"THE ABOLITIONIST!!!

"That infamous scoundrel, Thompson, will hold forth *this afternoon*, at the *Liberator* Office, No. 48 Washington Street. The present is a fair opportunity for the friends of the Union to *snake Thompson out!* It will be a contest between the Abolitionists and the friends of the Union. A purse of

$100 has been raised by a number of patriotic citizens to reward the individual who shall first lay violent hands on Thompson, so that he may be brought to the tar-kettle before dark. Friends of the Union, be vigilant!

"*Boston, Wednesday, 12 o'clock.*"

One of the men who carried the hand-bill about the city says: "I left a bill at a famous oil store, and it was caught up by one of the firm, who read it and loudly shouted for John to get him a bucket of green tar and be ready to tar and feather the Abolitionist."

And an unsigned paper, sent to Mr. Garrison, informed him that certain young men were prepared to go further yet. The paper ran: "A barrel of tar, a corrosive liquor, and a quantity of indelible ink was procured and in readiness. The plan was to take you and Mr. Thompson to the Common, tar and feather you, and then dye your face and hands black in a manner that would never change from a night negro color."

At three o'clock on that Wednesday afternoon, the 21st of October, the crowd began to

fill the streets. The ladies, coming to the hall, found the entrance blocked by jeering men.

About thirty of them passed in, however, and took their places, followed by a number of young fellows who kept up a loud hooting, stamping, and whistling.

Soon a well-known figure mounted the stairs and made its way into the hall.

"That's Garrison," ran the comment. Mr. Garrison sat down, but rising again, came back to the crowd at the lower end of the room and said: "Gentlemen, perhaps you are not aware that this is a meeting for ladies and those who have been invited to address them." Then, with a smile, "If, *gentlemen*, any of you are *ladies* in disguise, why, only apprize me of the fact, give me your names, and I will introduce you to the rest of your sex, and you can take seats among them."

Pleasantry never comes amiss with a crowd: for a while the noise was checked, but it broke out afresh as new-comers packed the stairway and pushed their way into the hall.

The tumult became more serious. Mr. Garrison, knowing that it was increased by his attendance, asked the president, Miss Parker, if he should go. She begged him to do so. The crowd was not a crowd of idlers alone. Young men of better standing had joined it, and older citizens were looking on, — not taking part, nor yet rebuking the rest. Ladies, while alone in such a mob, might meet with nothing worse than rudeness, but the presence of a man would give excuse for violence.

As he could not make his way out of the building, Mr. Garrison stepped into the anti-slavery office, which was separated from the hall by a board partition. His friend, Mr. Burleigh, was with him.

The noise in the hall did not cease. In the midst of it Miss Parker rose, and, as though quite undisturbed, went through the form of calling the meeting to order. She read passages from the Bible, as was her wont at every meeting, and offered a prayer.

Her clear tones stilled the clamor nearest

her, but fresh outbursts came from those who were beyond the reach of her voice.

A rush was made upon the door of the anti-slavery office. The panel split. Mr. Garrison, writing at his desk, saw flushed and angry faces peering through the break.

"There he is! that's Garrison! out with the scoundrel!" he heard them cry.

"You may as well open the door," he said quietly, to Mr. Burleigh.

From the street below came shouts for "Thompson! Thompson!" The mayor had come and was telling them that Thompson was not in the city. He also urged them to disperse and keep the peace. After this he entered the building.

Going to the ladies, he told them that if they would leave the hall at once, he would promise them protection; but if they lingered, he could not answer for their safety.

Meanwhile a message had come to the society from Mr. Francis Jackson. He invited the members to continue their meeting at his house. They agreed to accept his offer.

"Two and two to Francis Jackson's, Hollis Street," ran the order; and also the whisper, "Each with a colored friend!"

Two and two they filed out of the hall, every colored woman moving by the side of some white member whom the mob would be forced to respect.

"When we emerged into the open daylight," writes one of these ladies, "there was a roar of contempt and rage, which increased when they saw that we did not intend to separate, but walked in regular procession. They slowly gave way as we came out. . . . We saw the faces of those we had till now thought friends; men whom we never before met without giving the hand in friendly salutation."

When they were gone, the cry broke out with fury, "Garrison, Garrison! we must have Garrison! out with him! lynch him!"

Then the sign outside the anti-slavery office roused their ire. They were eager to tear it down.

"That sign must and shall come down,"

said two young men to the mayor. The mayor said he would have it taken in; but without waiting for this to be done by the proper person, one of the young men rushed to the window, tore the sign from its fastenings and flung it to the crowd. It was broken into fragments. That over, the cry for "Garrison! Garrison!" rang out again.

The mayor went into the anti-slavery office, and begged Mr. Garrison to make his escape.

IV.

Mr. Garrison wished to appeal to the mob himself.

"Oh, if they would only hear me for five minutes!" he said.

But his friends would not let him go out to the crowd. They joined their entreaties to those of the mayor, and Mr. Garrison yielded. Finding a window at the rear of the building, he swung himself out, and dropped upon a shed below. From the roof of the shed he made his way into a carpenter's shop, and then tried to get out into Wilson's Lane, now Devonshire Street.

The mob saw him there, and set up a shout. Rushing towards the entrance, they almost captured him, but the carpenter closed his door in their faces, and stoutly held them off.

Again Mr. Garrison wished to put himself into their hands, but again he was begged to avoid them, and once more obeying, hid himself in a room overhead.

The carpenter's door could not resist longer. A handful of men burst in, leaped up the stairs, and entered the room where Mr. Garrison was concealed.

Mr. John Reid Campbell, who had kept at Mr. Garrison's side, was there to confront them.

Forcing Mr. Campbell to the window, that he might be seen by the mass outside, they cried, "This is not Garrison, but Garrison's and Thompson's friend, and he says he knows where Garrison is, and won't tell."

A moment more, and they did not need to be told, for Garrison was found.

"On seeing me," says Mr. Garrison, "three or four of the rioters, uttering a yell, furiously dragged me to the window with the intention of hurling me from that height to the ground; but one of them relented and said, "Don't let us kill him outright." So they drew me back, and coiled a rope about my body, probably to drag me through the streets."

A ladder was placed against the side of the

house. Having climbed out upon it, Mr. Garrison went down to the street below.

A dozen hands stretched up to grasp him; his hat was knocked from his head, and torn to pieces by the crowd. The rope was still about him.

Freeing himself from that, he found that he was held by three or four powerful men, who had thrust themselves in front of the rest to seize him.

They kept possession of him, but he soon saw that they meant him no harm. Indeed, they had undertaken to defend him.

One of them afterwards said that he had at first thought the affair good sport, but now concluded it was going too far. So he said to a friend, "Let's go to the rescue."

Surrounding Mr. Garrison, they led him along at the head of the mob shouting, "He shan't be hurt! You shan't hurt him! Don't hurt him; he is an American."

Still the mob swept on; and "To the Common" was their counter-cry.

They neared the City Hall, which was then in the Old State House.

The mayor, at that moment was seen hastening toward them through State Street. Men meeting him had said, "They are going to hang him," meaning Garrison. "For God's sake save him!" He came upon the crowd at the corner of Wilson's Lane.

With the small force of police at his command, Mayor Lyman bent all his energies toward getting Mr. Garrison into the City Hall.

"To the Frog Pond!" shouted the mob.

"Help the mayor!" cried the police, and some of the bystanders rushed forward at the word.

At the south door of the City Hall the two parties had a sharp struggle. The mayor was victorious; by a great effort Mr. Garrison's sturdy champions, who had not loosened their hold, bore him in through the door, and carried him up into the mayor's room.

V.

The escape had been a narrow one, and danger was not yet past. The mob grew constantly larger. It was beyond the control of the police. As the building was then both Post Office and City Hall, the mayor felt anxiety for the safety of the mails as well as for Mr. Garrison. It seemed to him necessary to get Mr. Garrison into some place that could be better guarded.

The jail was the only stronghold in the city; the mayor urged Mr. Garrison to take refuge there.

While the papers were being made out, — papers committing Mr. Garrison to jail as a disturber of the peace, since he must be accused of some crime in order to be put behind bolts and bars, — Mr. Garrison, whose clothing had been torn by the mob, dressed himself anew. The young man who had been first to attempt to save him, exchanged coats with

him, and other articles of clothing were sent up from the Post Office below. One man lent a pair of pantaloons; "another, a coat; a third, a stock; a fourth, a cap; etc."

But the mayor knew that to get Mr. Garrison away, he must outwit the crowd that still watched at the doors.

He decided upon a ruse. The City Hall had two doors. By the mayor's orders a carriage drove rapidly down the street and stopped at the southern entrance. The men who had been helping him gravely ranged themselves in two lines, making a passage from the building to the carriage door.

The crowd gathered there, waiting to fall upon Mr. Garrison.

But just then another carriage drew up before the northern steps; Mr. Garrison, unrecognized at first in his different dress, came down from the mayor's office, and took his seat in the vehicle.

Those of the mob who had remained on this side of the City Hall raised a great shout and

rushed upon the carriage, with cries of, "Cut the traces! cut the reins!"

One drew a knife to cap the word with the deed; another flung a rope around the body of the carriage to overturn it, while a score clung to the wheels or flung themselves before the horses' heads.

A stout umbrella kept the knife at bay, the driver's whip lashed those who held the bits; the horses, starting forward just as the carriage was tilting over on one side, jerked the rope from the rioters' hands; a friendly chaise driving close to the wheels scraped off the men clinging there; and the beleaguered vehicle, thus rescued, dashed off to the jail.

While it was taking a roundabout course to Leverett Street, the mayor proceeded thither by a shorter route, and, by running most of the way, arrived in time to see Mr. Garrison alight and enter undisturbed.

Friends visited Mr. Garrison in the evening, finding him wholly serene, and he writes that he rested tranquilly through the night. But

what shame to Boston that a night's lodging in a grated cell was the best hospitality she could offer to William Lloyd Garrison on the 21st of October, 1835!

On the following morning Mr. Garrison was put through an examination before a judge, — merely for form's sake, — and then released.

Though he left the city for a few days, he was soon at his post again, writing, publishing, speaking, — working in every way for the cause.

Through twenty-five long years opinion slowly changed in Boston. The mob itself gained friends for Garrison. It roused to action the eloquent orator Wendell Phillips. It made new converts for the Abolitionists. Their number gradually increased. Boston became their stronghold; a hiding-place for many an escaping slave. And at last the cause prevailed. The Civil War, brought on by slavery, crushed out the evil which for the sake of peace and of the Union men had endured. In 1863 the Proclamation of Emancipation freed the

slaves; and by that time the nation, taught by its brave reformers, was ready to rejoice.

When the war was over, and the Union flag was raised upon Fort Sumter, Mr. Garrison went to Charleston, at President Lincoln's invitation, to be present at the ceremony.

Mr. Thompson was also there, and the two friends looked back together over their long years of effort, happy in the knowledge that the desired result had come at last.

The gratitude of the newly freed race was overwhelming. Thousands of the colored people were in Charleston, and whenever Mr. Garrison passed through the streets, they greeted him with shouts and songs of joy.

On the day after the flag-raising they claimed him for their own especial thanksgiving festival. Early in the morning they flocked to Citadel Square, where he was to speak to them. The colored children formed in a long procession, and marched in order to the place. While they waited for Mr. Garrison to arrive, a colored army officer addressed them; but presently

the crowd began to shout and sway. Garrison was coming!

With songs and cries and cheers they surged about him; those who reached him first lifted him from the ground and bore him on their shoulders to the speaker's stand.

They knew his worth. The nation has since learned to acknowledge it; and Mr. Garrison, we like to think, lived long enough to be conscious of his country's gratitude.

Certainly, he never regretted his years of effort. "What are you going to do?" he once asked, turning to a boy of seventeen, in the parlor at "Rockledge," his Roxbury home.

"I don't know," was the doubting answer.

With a smile which showed that he was thinking of his own career, Mr. Garrison said, "I can wish for a young man no better fortune than to be the champion of a hated cause!"

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